



inside erin THE AIF COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

It seems like there has been a lot going on this month. I realize that it probably doesn't particularly seem that way to you, but we have been doing some stuff behind the scenes to get ready for this issue.

This month we have another installment of The Aphrodite Chronicles, A group discussion on The Reunion by Moriarty, a top 10 list by Knight Errant, and a couple of game reviews. In addition to all that, we have been working to come up with the nominees for the 2009 Erin Awards. This list is now ready, and you can read all about it later in this issue.



A Letter From the Editor

Purple Dragon

Please vote as soon as you can. We haven't made any final decisions for when the awards ceremony will be, but I'll give you some tentative dates. I was thinking to end the voting on Feb, 22, and hold the awards ceremony on the 27th. Again, these dates are not written in stone yet, so keep your eyes open for possible changes.

That's it for now. Enjoy yourself, I'll see you next month, and don't forget to vote. ♦

Contents

A Letter from the Editor 1
This Month in AIF 1
This Month at TF Games 2
This Month at the Collective 2
Erin Awards Nominees 4
The Aphrodite Chronicles 6
Group Discussion: The Reunion 8
Centerfold by GoblinBoy 11
Top 10 List: Knight Errant 16
Rev: Aquila Station 17
Rev: Memories Are Made of These 19

Mission Statement

Inside Erin is written and published by people who enjoy AIF. It is done for fun, but we also have some goals that we seek to achieve through the newsletter:

- 1. To encourage the production of more quality AIF games by providing advice from game developers, and by offering constructive criticism that is specifically relevant to AIF.
2. To encourage activity and growth in the AIF community. We aim to generate a constant level of activity so that there aren't long periods in which people can lose interest in AIF.
3. To help document and organize the AIF community. This is done through reporting on games and events, as well as by helping to organize community-wide activities such as competitions and the yearly Erin Awards.

This month we've been working on the nominations for the upcoming Erin awards. Purple Dragon may well want to talk in more detail about the awards elsewhere, so I won't go into all the details here. Apart from a new game, however (listed below - the first game of 2010 and the new Erins season), there wasn't a whole lot else going on during the month, so I'll take a few lines to discuss it.



First of all, remember that while this is two year's worth of games, it's still not a huge selection of games that were eligible for nomination, because the years were thin on releases. Most of the games were mini-comp entries, and while these can be quite good, they have already been through a competition and are not eligible for certain awards (such as "best game" and "best threesome/orgy"). Why do we get so much more activity for the mini-comps? Maybe because with the voting we get more authors able to get some kind of feedback on what people think of their games, or maybe the competition gets authors interested.

Either way, the moral of the story is this: vote in the upcoming awards! By helping the Erin awards to work out well you are adding fuel to the development of future games. Also, since I have no games up for consideration this year, I'll make this small suggestion. If there's a game out there that you liked in 2007/8 and you don't think it got the attention it deserved; say, maybe a less popular release that you enjoyed (I don't have anything specific in mind, but I find I always tend to like some of the more obscure games) make sure you put in a vote for it to help that game and author get recognised.

And finally in other news, there was a bit of a scavenger hunt for two older games over on the AIF Archive - Gamble and Casino. Why were two gambling themed games being sought after? Don't ask me, but if you are interested both are available on aifcommunity.org.

Continued on page 3

One major advantage (among many) of writing an article each month for this distinguished publication is that my editor hasn't insisted on any kind of word limit. So I can be as long winded or as short as I want. So here goes.

January was a quiet month on the forum, nothing happened.

What, you want more?

For those who come fresh to any of the three groups this must come as a bit of a surprise. After all, I'm sure that many groups keep active all year long. But most of them don't rely on the actual participants quite so much. After all, only about 10% of the participants put in the majority of the content that everyone is here for, the games themselves.

Most of our throughput is from students who have school at this time of years, and those in the real world have jobs to take up their time. Figure in the weather and other unfortunate and fortunate real world events and you have enough to keep people from creating or commenting on anything new.

All this is worth saying, and not just for me to fill up an entire article, because it's easy to forget that people do this for fun, as a hobby. Many of the sharp words and major "discussions" are from people who forget this and wonder why a game isn't published or even why it isn't finished. I for one I'm going to enjoy the silence. And yes I am, of course, working on something, and yes real life stuff keeps getting in the way. Even if it's nothing more serious than Mass Effect 2!

In general, keeping with this whole article, nothing really happened in the forum this month. Vengeance, with the able assistance of the modest GreatOne, has posted and update of *BBCHW* (RAGS) now with a real plot! Whilst Jaimehlers has created his own Java based engine for his brief games called *Yosh!*

Things should be a little more animated next month and the next article is guaranteed to have 90% less exclamation marks! ♦

January in the Collective was a quiet month, but here are the highlights!

Xirel released a new game called *Remote Control*. It is described as: "about a guy who finds a remote control at his best friends place."

This is the first beginnings of the game and Xirel would appreciate any thoughts on it.

You can find the game here:

http://rapidshare.com/files/335266413/Remote_Controlled_-_Bills_Tale_v0.5.rag

http://www.4shared.com/file/197051926/bdae85db/Remote_Controlled_-_Bills_Tale.html

and on the Collective at:

<http://games-collective.net/Remote%20Controlled%20-%20Bills%20Tale%20v0.5.rag>

And the discussion thread is here:

<http://hypnopics-collective.net/viewtopic.php?f=11&t=16839>

This Month At

T Games
F Site

By Nandi Bear



COLLECTIVELY MADE...

**This Month
at the
Collective...**

By TeraS



Continued on page 3

This Month in AIF, continued from page 1

New Games

Aquila Station, by Portmanteau. Released 20th Jan 2010 for TADS 3. You are a Maintenance Technician on Aquila Station—a small, understaffed and relatively unimportant science station near the edge of inhabited space. However, things are looking to be perhaps a bit more interesting in the near future. A new science team has arrived, and one member in particular seems to be quite fetching, while the pilot who flew them in seems both alluring and (perhaps more importantly) interested in you. ♦

Collective, continued from page 2

Darstan noted that he is working on a new version of the game *Bodywerks*. He said that:

“As an update for the next release of BW: Work was progressing much slower than what I was hoping for (I had sort of a writer’s block). I aim now for a release of BW 1.20 around early February 2010. The size of version 1.11 is around 27 MB. Version 1.20 is already at 45 MB.”

So stay tuned for that...

Lydia02 has begun a new game called *Darthmoth Manor*. It is still in the predevelopment stage, but she noted that:

“I’ve started a new game called Darthmoth Manor. It’s a horror adventure which takes me well outside of the corwin universe for the first time game wise. So for those players who corwin’s world wasn’t your thing or who don’t care for the dating sim style of the last installment, maybe this will be more what you are looking for. The game is set in a small, old fashion town that has the usual house that has been the subject of so many rumors that no one knows where the line of truth lies anymore. Fancy, lore and pure gossip have all picked apart what there were of facts and twisted them in their tellings. Now the house is avoided and mostly forgotten except as a setting for the stories told to scare little ones each night. It was a comfortable routine until the unthinkable happened. A family actually moved into the old manor house. Or how much of this is even fact? A solitary young girl is seen coming and going. Nary proof of an entire family. The story is voiced by a young girl who finds this new town as strange as the town folks find her. And the murder’s that start at the same time her ‘family’ moved in haven’t helped for a smooth transition. Is she the innocent recluse she appears to be or does every young girl want to be a serial killer these days?”

You can follow this game in the discussion thread here:

<http://hypnopics-collective.net/viewtopic.php?f=11&t=16779>

Lastly for this month, Firstborn678 appeared to tease us with this little note about Spell 4 All:

*“Okay - don’t get all excited guys... There isn’t any major progress to report and no I don’t have a finished version. I was asked to make a comment to keep everyone abreast of what’s going on and as it has been quite a while since I have done so I thought it was a good idea. Wow... Quite a few *months* since I last posted about this. I hadn’t realized it had been that long. Time flies, etc, etc... I have not quite development of the game, but it has significantly slowed yet again as real life stuff has gotten in the way of spending massive amounts of time on the game. I do intend to finish this as it will have been a very long time coming. Fear not, but please do not hold your breath. I don’t mean to be so flakey about this stuff but I just have a lot of other things that take chunks of my time... significantly more-so now than when I put out v13.*

Sorry, and thanks for the support.”

And you can follow this game in the discussion thread here:

<http://hypnopics-collective.net/viewtopic.php?f=11&t=16323>

And that’s January at the Collective! ♦

As most of you know, The Erin Awards are upon us. There are a couple of unusual things about them this year, and although they have been mentioned in other places, I wanted to go over them again here just to make sure that everyone is aware of them. First, since the awards were not held last year all games from the last two years are eligible this year. Second, we have changed the deadline that games must be released by in order to be considered for the current year. Up until this time, that deadline has always been October 31st. As of this year it has been changed to December 31st. What this means is that the list of games under consideration includes all games released between the dates of November 1, 2007 and December 31, 2009.



For the last several weeks, a nominations committee has been re-playing and discussing that list of games. For this round of the competition each committee member was allowed to choose up to five games for each category. These lists were then sent in to me, and I tallied the scores to come up with the following list. As is always the case, there were many games that received a vote or two that did not make the list. You should by no means take the following list as being the only games out there worth playing. It's just that, in the end, we have to draw the line somewhere to keep the final ballot manageable, and so the top vote getters (usually five) were chosen to be on the ballot. With only two exceptions that I can think of, each game in each category below received at least three (and usually more) votes. Considering the fact that there were only 7 people on the nominations committee I think that is a very respectable percentage indeed.

So that was how the first round was done. Now the second round is up to all of you. Each category now has from three to five nominations listed, and Knight Errant is once again setting up a very easy to use online voting ballot. The ballot should be up and running very soon and I'll post notifications in all the normal places when it is ready to go. The more votes we receive, the more accurate the counts will be so please take a few moments and vote. It really won't take very long, and it's an easy way to support the community, and the authors that have given us so much enjoyment. In addition to the following list, we also ask you to write in your choice for the Badman Memorial Lifetime Achievement Awards. This is given to one individual who has had a significant impact on the AIF Community. Anyone is eligible for this award except for those who have already won it.

Nominees for the 2009 Erin Awards

Candidates in each category are listed in alphabetical order.

<p>Best PC Awarded to best player character. A named PC is not a requirement for this category.</p> <p>Aegis, The Mechano-Menace Kelly, My Special Gift PC, A Lady in Waiting PC, Last Week Before the Wedding PC, School Dreams 3: School Dreams Forever</p>	<p>Best NPC Awarded to best non-player character.</p> <p>Alison, School Dreams 3: School Dreams Forever Becky, School Dreams 3: School Dreams Forever Lacy, Office Fantasy: Working Late Sara, Winter Break Veronica, A Lady in Waiting</p>
<p>Best one-on-one sex scene Awarded to best sex scene involving only two participants.</p> <p>PC/Becky, School Dreams 3: School Dreams Forever PC/Kes, A Night with Kes PC/Lacy, Office Fantasy: Working Late PC/Sara, Winter Break PC/Veronica, A Lady in Waiting</p>	<p>Best Threesome/Orgy Awarded to best sex scene involving more than two participants.</p> <p>PC, Dani/Liz, A Night With Dani and Liz PC/Maggie/Amanda, Last Week Before the Wedding PC/Mike/Melissa, School Dreams 3: School Dreams Forever PC/Molly/Becky, School Dreams 3: School Dreams Forever</p>

<p>Hottest Game Awarded to the game that is most arousing.</p> <p>A Lady in Waiting Last Week Before the Wedding Office Fantasy: Working Late School Dreams 3: School Dreams Forever Winter Break</p>	<p>Best Use of Multimedia Awarded to the game with the best use of images and/or sounds.</p> <p>In Darkness School Dreams 3: School Dreams Forever The Mechano-Menace</p>										
<p>Best Technical Implementation Awarded to the game that had the cleanest technical implementation and the most ambitious technical design.</p> <p>Last Week Before the Wedding Office Fantasy: Working Late School Dreams 3: School Dreams Forever The Mechano-Menace Winter Break</p>	<p>Best Writing Awarded to the game with the best story, atmosphere and use of the language.</p> <p>In Darkness Last Week Before the Wedding Riding Home School Dreams 3: School Dreams Forever The Mechano-Menace</p>										
<p>Most Innovative or Original Game Awarded to the game that best stretched the limits of the parser, was the most creative in its presentation and best redefined what is considered to be AIF.</p> <p>In Darkness Intimate Encounters School Dreams 3: School Dreams Forever The Mechano-Menace Winter Break</p>	<p>Best Gameplay and/or Puzzles Awarded to the game with the most enjoyable gameplay and puzzle features.</p> <p>A Lady in Waiting Last Week Before the Wedding Office Fantasy: Working Late School Dreams 3: School Dreams Forever The Mechano-Menace</p>										
<p>Funniest Game Awarded to the funniest game of the year.</p> <p>Bad Day to be a Princess Last Week Before the Wedding Obedience The Mechano-Menace The Pizza Boy</p>	<p>Best New Author Awarded to the best author whose first game was released this year.</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>DaveDKW</td> <td>Madquest8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dudeman</td> <td>Negative Slippy Slide</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Erus</td> <td>Rabbi</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gray64</td> <td>Raul</td> </tr> <tr> <td>JustaHackWriter</td> <td>Tanner V. Chorus</td> </tr> </table>	DaveDKW	Madquest8	Dudeman	Negative Slippy Slide	Erus	Rabbi	Gray64	Raul	JustaHackWriter	Tanner V. Chorus
DaveDKW	Madquest8										
Dudeman	Negative Slippy Slide										
Erus	Rabbi										
Gray64	Raul										
JustaHackWriter	Tanner V. Chorus										
<p>Best Short Game Awarded to the best ‘short’ game (generally of the approximate size of a mini-comp game, although the rules are less hard and fast as in a mini-comp) of the year. Note that games eligible for this category are not eligible for “Best Game of the Year”.</p> <p>A Lady in Waiting In Darkness Office Fantasy: Working Late The Mechano-Menace Winter Break</p>	<p>Best Game of the Year Awarded to the best game of the year (not including ‘short’ games).</p> <p>A Night With Dani and Liz Last Week Before the Wedding School Dreams 3: School Dreams Forever The Magic Wishing Fountain</p>										

Dear Mortal Men and Women,

Over the past few months, I have been relating the tale of Alan, a suburban man in his early forties who I decided to send into an alternate parallel universe for one day - an alternate reality in which real life very closely resembles adult interactive fiction. In this universe people have sex with one another, without any guilt or social repercussion, as a routine form of entertainment.

Calling it a routine form of entertainment may not be entirely accurate, actually. Sex is more routine there, yes, but it's not as simple as plopping down and turning on the television. There's no taboo whatsoever about casual encounters, but people there generally can't just walk up to someone and expect to get sex just from asking for it. It is, predictably, more like AIF, where it's almost never possible to get the sex scenes without doing something to earn them. It's lucky for Alan that he's an accommodating kind of guy, as we'll soon see.



But before I continue, a quick peek back at the AIF Universe version of Alan, who woke up with 'normal' Tanya (Alan's wife), and was neither surprised nor unsurprised that she didn't want to fuck him. After all, they don't do it every morning, only perhaps half. But we hope he doesn't get into too much trouble expecting to get it from 'normal' women. I will get back to him in more detail in the next months, after I relate more of 'normal' Alan's adventures.

Alan drove to his office, thinking about the sex with Tanya, and puzzling over the 'more tonight' comment she made when they had finished. It had been ages since she'd given it up more than once in a day and Alan fervently hoped Tanya was entering a ramped-up libido phase. He was so wrapped in these thoughts he didn't notice any differences in his fellow commuters, but if he had chosen to look at them he would have seen more mixed-gender couples (rather than drivers alone in their cars) than he customarily would, and might possibly have noticed some interesting, openly flirty body language there. These are some of the normal things in the AIF Universe, and of course they feel perfectly natural and don't project as odd unless you're looking for them specifically.

After settling into his cubicle with his cup of coffee, Alan looked up to see Holly from the Congressional Liaison department hovering around his desk, apparently looking to chat. She was about ten years Alan's junior, single, and always very gregarious and friendly, often sassy and flirty without crossing over any lines of impropriety. Her voice carried when she talked, and people's heads popped out of their cubicles to look and join in conversations when they heard her from across the room. Her presence brightened what was otherwise quite a drab governmental office.

Alan gave her a quick once-over. Holly was five-foot-four of fabulous curves, and she stood resting her elbow on the top of the partition, looking at him with a bemused smirk as she watched him eyeball her. She was sass personified, swinging her dangerous hips from side to side, bumping them against one panel of the cubicle and then the other. She was wearing her very-well-loved blue jeans that had conformed to her every nook and curve, revealing creases along her thighs and diving, dirty-girl tight between her legs. Her voluptuous upper body was barely concealed in a tight black tank top that seemed to make her breasts look almost too heavy to hold. Her long brown hair was tied up on her head, exposing her smooth neck and shoulders. As seemingly risqué as this getup was, Alan had seen her wear it before and wasn't clued in that anything was different. All he could think of was how much he loved Casual Dress Day.

"Hey Holly, what's up?" Alan asked. "How was your vacation? Where did you go again?"

"Hi Alan. I was in Mexico. It was beautiful. Sun, ocean, delicious margaritas. The whole deal. Do you like my tan?" She held her arms over her head and spun slowly around once in a circle, still swinging her hips, showing off her warmly darkened flesh. Alan took the opportunity, as he always did, to give her spectacular bustle of an ass a quick peek while she was facing away.

"Wow. You look great," he responded.

"Thanks! Too bad I had to come back here to pasty-white work," she sulked, "but at least I'll look good for a while."

After chatting idly about Mexico for a few more minutes, Holly shifted to a more businesslike tone and changed the subject. "I don't know if you saw it yet, but I got an e-mail from Congressman Dwerling. He's asking for budget data on just ten southern and eastern states' outlays from the YATES program from 2001 through 2007, and since you're the budget guy, I sent his request on to you. Do you think you can compile that for me?"

Alan thought for a moment. He had that information, of course, but distilling out just ten states' 2001-2007 receipts from the whole program would take at least half his day, and responding to Congressional requests really was supposed to be Holly's job. She saw him hesitating, and perhaps even read the 'isn't that your job' expression starting to cross his face, and she started flirtatiously bumping her hips against the cubicle again. "You'll have my thanks if you can do this for me, Alan," she said, then continued with a 'something assumed' tone, "and I promise I'll make it up to you."

Trying not to let his imagination fill in the blanks with unrealistic interpretations but feeling strangely hopeful nonetheless, he agreed, and with a "you're the best, Alan," Holly went back to her desk. He had the feeling there was something suggestive about her offer, but it was so casual as to not necessarily mean anything. Certainly not that. That doesn't happen, right?

He finished a few of his own pressing bits of work, then dug into the details of what Dwerling was asking for from the YATES program. Alan quickly realized that it wasn't just the budget amounts, but the compiled data from numerous HSW scores as well. This is information that Holly could provide more easily than he could, so he called her back.

"Ok, so you caught me," she laughed, elbowing him. "But what if we do it together? We could knock this thing out in a couple of hours."

"The only way we could do it together is if we're both sitting at the same computer," Alan observed. "Otherwise it would be impossible to collate the information."

Holly rolled over a chair and they sat together, distilling the data out of the program's many files, slowly filling in Congressman Dwerling's spreadsheets. Alan was very conscious of her body there, the way she let her thighs spread beyond the edge of her chair, letting them ooze into his personal space, even brushing them softly against his thighs. He tried hard not to get distracted, but there was something electric and sexual about her demeanor and behavior. It started out so casual as to be almost imperceptible, but got gradually more overt. She'd frequently touch him, apparently by accident, when they were passing papers back and forth, and he came to notice every touch as they sent increasingly intense charges through him. He started unconsciously matching her behavior, touching her hands, adding a bit of suggestion to his own voice, responding to her body language cues with his own.

"I really appreciate your help on this, Alan," Holly said, when they'd plugged in the last piece of data. "It would have taken me days to do this on my own. Dwerling would have been screaming for my head. You literally saved my life." She rested her hand on his and looked easily into his eyes. Alan felt a surge of taboo desire surge through him. "I promised to make it up to you," she continued, "C'mon. I'll take you to lunch."

At that point - after hours of flirtatious exchange - Alan was quite hot and bothered and lunch seemed a severe anticlimax. But it was, within his world, the realistic outcome, so he agreed, and walked with her toward the lobby, until Holly stopped in front of the Deputy Secretary's office, grabbed his hand, and stopped him in front of the door and knocked.

"Secretary Johnson is out of town," Alan reminded her, and sure enough, there was no answer from behind the door.

"I know that," she said, then opened the door and sharply ushered him inside, closing it behind them. "Lunch can wait," she said and grabbed him around the waist in both her hands and stepped up close to him.

Obviously, at this point, Alan was way beyond his normal experience with Holly, and was having a completely remarkable day. I'll resume this tale next month, and let you know just what happened in that office.

Until then, I wish you all wonderful love,

Aphrodite

This month's group discussion is on *The Reunion* by Moriarty. It was released in November 2004, and for those of you not familiar with it, here is a very brief synopsis. Your 10 year high school reunion is quickly approaching and your fiancé has made it clear that she is planning on attending, and wants you to as well. Her reasons for going are not limited to just catching up with old friends, but also to complete some unfinished business with some old boyfriends. She suggests that you might want to take this opportunity to do the same before the two of you get married. She has made the reservations (booking you separate rooms) and has left you your plane ticket. All you have to do is pick it up, and follow her south of the border.



I'm pleased to announce that the author has agreed to stop by this month and chime in a time or two, so please welcome Moriarty to the discussion. I am also happy to say that ExLibris has agreed to participate on a more or less ongoing basis (although he makes no actual promises). Next month we will be discussing the recent Christmas Micro-comp (such as it is). I have agreed to discuss not only the games themselves, but also (if anyone is interested) what the hell I was thinking of in trying such an annoying, restrictive thing in the first place. In that spirit, if you would like to participate, and throw in your own two cents worth then just drop me a line (purpledragon.aif AT gmail DOT com) and I'd be happy to include you.

As always, this discussion contains some pretty heavy spoilers so read at your own risk. Now, without further ado, let the discussion begin.

Purple Dragon: I have always liked this game, and there are many reasons for that. The writing is great, the sex is hot, and since I'm one of the people who like good puzzles in their games (as long as it also has those other two things) I wasn't disappointed here. I also really liked the idea of the manuscript that the PC is writing, and how each encounter becomes inspiration for another story. The stories themselves are also very well written, and a nice little bonus to the game as a whole. As a general premise for the game, the combination of the reunion and the manuscript works well. Or put another way, it's as good an excuse as any (and better than a lot) for why the PC is having sex with anything that moves and has breasts.

The game also has a very good hint system, which is something that not many AIF games seem to have. I've always had mixed feeling about hint systems. On one hand, if I really get stuck it's nice to be able to bring up a hint directly relating to the problem I'm having without having to result to a walkthrough, which usually gives me more information than I wanted to know at the time. On the other hand, some people might have the tendency to overuse it, which could lessen the enjoyment of the game in the long run. Of course, that is a personal choice, and I realize that some people hate puzzles so much that they might not even give the game a chance without the hint system in place. So overall, it's probably better to have it than not. Each individual player has to decide how much they are going to let themselves 'cheat.'

Breaking into specific aspects of the game for just a moment, there was one section that I found interesting and a little amusing (although I don't know that the author meant it to be). I'm talking about the dart gun puzzle. The PC sees his fiancé getting it on with another man, and he goes to the trouble to buy the dart gun to shoot him and get him out of the picture. The interesting/funny thing here is that not only did she tell him that that is what she was going to be doing this weekend, but by that point I think I had already guided the PC through two sexual encounters, and was working toward several others. I think that this kind of hypocrisy is common, not only in the US, but in many other parts of the world as well. A woman who cheats is a slut. A man who cheats is a stud. I'm probably reading too much into this situation, and I doubt the author intended any great social commentary, but I still chuckled a bit as I shot the bastard.

A. Bomire: I've always enjoyed this game as well. The overall premise I didn't care for upon first playing it, however, and I'll speak more to that later. However, once I got beyond that and started playing, I liked the game. I think the reason is for the puzzles - they were pretty good, without being the mindbending head scratchers that always turned me off in mainstream IF.

Oh, and also for other reasons that PD already mentioned - hot characters, fun sex, etc.

This is the part of the game that initially bothered me. The fiancé is going to the reunion with the stated reason to cheat on her guy. I mean - really? I can see, and even more easily accept, going to "catch up" and end up cheating. It might even be more believable if the PC had shown signs up until then that he might be less than faithful himself, or even leaning in that direction. After all, as PD points out, the player has several encounters on his own. But I just didn't believe the premise that the fiancé is saying, seemingly

out of the blue, “Hey, I’m going to cheat on you and you need to be OK with that. In fact, go ahead and cheat as well. It’s all good!” It is a little along the same argument that was made about “The Gamma Gals” and led to the whole Erin vs. Erin discussion a few years back.

Granted, this is fantasy, and male-fantasy as well, where it is perfectly OK for the guy to have sex with every living breathing female he sees, no matter what his current relationship is. But, it just didn’t sit well with me. Of course, in a twisted sort of logic, it does allow the player to go ahead and have sex with every living breathing female he sees, as his fiancé has given him permission - and perhaps this was Moriarty’s whole idea. If the PC is going to cheat (and that is the point of the game, after all), then let’s make it OK.

Okay, that’s enough of that, let’s talk about one other scene that sort of comes at you out of left field - the piratess. Did anyone else think that this scene was sort of “One of these things is not like the other?” It was great fun to play, and really hot as well, but it just seemed sort of stuck on to the rest of the game.

Before anyone gets the idea that I’m just picking the game apart, I do want to say how much I enjoyed some of the other scenes, like the Jungle scene. This one, like the scene with the pirates, seems odd and stuck on until you find out (spoiler alert) that it is a movie set for a porno film. That was a great way to fit that in.

ExLibris: When PD first mentioned that we were going to be doing Reunion next, I replayed it and wrote an in-depth review. Naturally I can’t find that review now, so my comments here are just off the top of my head. For some reason I remembered the protagonist as being married, but he’s actually just engaged. To be honest, I’m not sure he’ll make it to the altar. It’s probably a warning sign when all your fiancée buys you for your birthday is a “simple key chain”. And then there’s the wanting to have sex with other men thing...

I’m in two minds about the opening as well. On the one hand it makes the game a lot more interesting, original and memorable than if the protagonist had been a single guy and the game just started at the hotel. On the other hand it just feels too... serious, especially when you get to the main part of the game and it’s essentially a romp. I know what my reaction would be to such a situation in real life, and it involves getting locks changed. So from that point of view the opening made it harder for me to get into the game. It also implies that part of the PC’s motivation for having sex is to spite his fiancée, which is again not what I would expect from something as traditionally light-hearted as a romp. Speaking of spite, is it just me who wishes that the scenes in which the PC dumps Cathy were a bit more involved?

As far as the piratess scene goes AB, no, you’re not alone there. A couple of the other scenes strained my suspension of disbelief (notably the scene with Melissa, I mean just how stupid can someone be), but that scene just broke it apart. From the meta-comments of the old salt to the pirate ship itself, it just seems out of place in a game that more or less realistic in every other sense. The first thing I noticed when I was replaying Reunion was the quality of the writing, especially the room descriptions, which really made a huge difference to how much I enjoyed the game. The descriptions were long enough to provide a real sense of what the area was like, without becoming mini-epics. That carried over to the rest of the game as well. The level of humour was also a plus, reminding me of some of the old Sierra games. The only blot on the horizon was the number of spelling mistakes, either typos or persistent mistakes.

Rather than being character- or story-driven, Reunion is puzzle-driven. Initially when you start the game it looks as though it’s quite non-linear, but actually the chains of puzzles you need to solve impose a structure on it. For example, to get the scene with Cynthia you need a cocktail, for which you need a coconut, for which you need a rope, for which you need some money, for which you need a bottle, for which you need the lantern. Most of the puzzles are reasonably straightforward and logical, although there were a couple that I found to be non sequiturs (notably the bartender) or which verged into guess the verb for me. That would be a mark against the game if it wasn’t for the extremely well implemented help system, which Reunion ends up getting bonus points for.

The structure imposed by the puzzles means that the scene with Morgan is likely to be the first one the player encounters. Given the way that the game is set up, I think it was a good decision to make the PC an unwilling participant (at least initially) in the first sex scene. It gets past whatever reluctance the PC might initially have had about cheating on Cathy and gives him a way to rationalise it conscience-wise.

Purple Dragon: Actually, strangely enough, Kerrie was the first scene I got to, and if Morgan is a good choice for the first scene for the reasons you mention, then Kerrie is exactly the wrong choice. The PC goes completely out of his way to bang a girl who he has never seen before, has no history with, and has no emotional stake in. Not a big deal, just thought it was an interesting contrast.

ExLibris: One thing that struck me as odd is how little the actual reunion appears in the game. Only half the women you interact with were actually at high school with the PC, and the only ‘reunion event’ I can think occurs just before the scene with Evet. For

most of the rest of the game you're running around an ordinary tropical resort (at least as ordinary as you can be with pirate ships and 'magic crystals'), which struck me as something of a lost opportunity. In particular it would have been nice for the PC to get some closure with Chet (ideally by punching him in the face).

The two things I remembered best about Reunion were the beginning and the ending, or endings I should say. Having multiple endings is a big plus for a game in my opinion, as it reinforces the fact that the PC's decisions actually have an impact on the story. The endings themselves vary from the unbelievable (Morgan, Melissa), to the sort of believable (Cynthia, 'Barry', Kerrie), to the actually believable (Cathy, Evet). The ending with Melissa is probably my least favorite, as I found the idea of sailing off in a pirate ship more believable than someone being as dumb as Melissa is portrayed during the game (though Cathy doesn't come out of that scene looking especially bright either, I mean would you really ditch Melissa for a non-existent massage?). My favorite is probably the ending with Evet, as it's the most romantic and comes with the added bonus of giving Cathy a one-way ticket to Dumpsville.

I enjoyed replaying Reunion. It's a little unfortunate that it was released in 2005 (probably the strongest year for AIF ever) as I think it would have picked up an Erin or two most other years.

Purple Dragon: I noticed that as well. IPCU, TNC, Fever Cabin, CWIII, The Sex Artist. There was some steep competition that year.

Moriarty: I agree with all the comments thus far.

The premise was a bit of a stretch. What seemed like the biggest stretch when writing it was that the Reunion would take place in Mexico.

I'm intrigued though that the rest of you find "one last urge" before marriage the hard to swallow part. For me personally it would be out of character, but I can imagine many relationships where this might play out. In fact for the protagonist it plays out as well though he doesn't realize this need until after Evet has fulfilled it. In some ways Cathy is just brutally honest about her wants and needs. More to that point, I tried to reinforce at the beginning is that the player and Cathy are not honestly compatible. But truly I needed to make a better case for the player and Cathy being together in the first place.

Anyway, I also agree with the awkwardness of the pirate scene and Melissa, and even possibly the native. If I had it to do over again those are the encounters I would remove or try to add something more relevant.

Purple Dragon: The pirate and Melissa scenes maybe, but I really liked the native story. Even if it had been 'real' it wouldn't have been as big of a problem as the pirate scene, and having it be a movie set was just a cute little touch. The little remarks that it feels like you are being watched had me thinking that the natives were coming after us (which would make sense) so when the camera crew pops out it gave me a little chuckle.

Moriarty: I would also remove the slave story simply because it turned out more horror than eroticism. Additionally the abortion story I think struck a lot of women players the wrong way - not my intent. I had no idea where that story was going until it was done. Finally someone pointed out the jock was way too stupid. I think this is true, as I was playing stereotypes with him in order to downplay him, but it went too far.

On the plus side, I do think the puzzles came together well and I found myself laughing at my own jokes which.. well.. says a lot about me.. But hopefully it also made the game funny. I also found my own writing titillating.

I doubt I will ever find time to do another game but if I did I think a lot would have been learned from doing this one.

Knight Errant: To my knowledge, Reunion is one of the first TADS 3 games, and I think Moriarty did an excellent job working with it. It's not an easy system to learn, but I'm quite impressed that Moriarty created such a large and largely bug-free effort. He also played with the TADS 3 hint system, which is in my opinion sorely underrated. I'm pretty much a lightweight when it comes to puzzles, but at the same time I prefer not to have the solution thrown right at me. Moriarty did a good job with progressively detailed hints to get me moving on the story.

For the scenes, like many others here I didn't care for the whole pirate/old salt interaction, it just stretched belief too much. The native was much better, as the unbelievable aspect was countered by it actually being a movie. I liked the "manuscript", it had some excellent writing. I really could believe that the PC was a writer gathering material.



INSIDE ERIN The AIF Community Newsletter



Love Kim

by
Goblinboy

Like many others, I ended up getting really annoyed at Cathy and it really pissed me off on my first playthrough that I got the Cathy ending. Honestly, given everything that went on in that game, it would've been nearly impossible for me to be satisfied with ending up with Cathy. I could never figure out why the PC was with Cathy in the first place, and I think the apartment intro scene was a huge missed opportunity to develop their past relationship history and the motivation for the PC's further action. Instead, Reunion seemed like it was trying to both be a romp and a plot-driven story, with each half hindering the other half from its full potential.

Evet, on the other hand, was great. I really liked how sweet and tender that scene was, tender scenes are few and far between in AIF. The only thing that would've made that better would be to get revenge against Chet. I also really liked Kerrie, the Girls Gone Wild girl. Unlike Melissa, Kerrie was realistically dumb, and it actually seemed feasible that she wouldn't catch on to what was really going on. It was also a well-managed slow flirtation until the excellent point where Kerrie realized that the PC was straight.

ExLibris: Just to show how observant I am, I completely missed the manuscript until now. Something that struck me as a little odd was how the majority of the sex scenes were set up. Three of them occur because the woman thinks the PC is someone else, another occurs because the woman is drugged, and another happens at sword point. I don't know what that says about the PC, but it's something else that doesn't fit with the idea of Reunion as a straight romp. It also makes the PC's motivations very hazy, which is something of a bugbear of mine.

Moriarty: Wow... What does it say about the AUTHOR?!?!? Seriously.. that's very interesting. And it was not premeditated.

ExLibris: I think Cathy was the best characterised of the NPCs, it's just that she was characterised as being very self-centred. For example, as evidence for her love for the PC she mentions the sacrifice she's making in living in the PC's tiny apartment, implying that she could easily hook up with someone wealthier (interestingly that also implies that she doesn't work herself, which makes me wonder what she does all day as it's obviously not cooking and cleaning). Her attitude makes me wonder why she stays with the PC, though the fact that he doesn't look out of place on the set of a porn film might have something to do with it. So from that point of view, I find her wanting to have a 'last hurrah' to be perfectly believable. It's also believable (though not particularly satisfying) that the PC chases after her, instead of realising that he could do better. Kerrie is probably my favourite NPC, I think because of the amount (and quality) of dialogue she gets in her scene. Evet comes in second, even though I think she's the best match for the PC, mainly because she feels like a passive character, especially compared to Cathy or Kerrie. Evet bursting into tears probably contributed to that impression. Her hooking up with Chet at the prom doesn't make a great deal of sense to me either. Oddly enough, that description is not a million miles away from a game I started (but probably won't finish) writing for the next minicomp.

Purple Dragon: I think that the opening was a better way to handle the situation than most things would have been. I think the problem is the difference between the way the PC is presented in the beginning, and what he ends up doing throughout the game. It is initially apparent that he does not want to go to the reunion, and that he feels no need to sow his wild oats. However, he then spends the entire game sowing them all the hell over the place.

I can see two main ways that this could have been handled differently. First, the option could have been given to play the game without the PC having to have sex with anyone. Of course, who wants to play an AIF game with no sex in it right?

The second way would have been to make the PC more open to the whole idea in the beginning. Having them both be into the idea might have made it play smoother, and could have made the scene where they compare notes a lot hotter since it would feel more like they were doing it together. Would that have been a better way to go? I don't know. Overall, I don't have as much problem with the premise as others seem to. In real life, if my wife had suggested something like this before we got married then she would have been going alone, and I would have been gone when she got back. But this isn't real life, it's a game, and I've become pretty good at suspending disbelief when it's required.

And yes, I wish the breakup segments with Cathy had been a bit more involved as well.

ExLibris: Looking at the sex scenes overall, I'd have to say that Melissa is the one I enjoyed the least. The set up (a. that Melissa is too stupid to realise the PC is male, and b. that Cathy would ditch Melissa for a non-existent massage) required a suspension of disbelief that I wasn't capable of. There's also minimal interaction with Melissa beforehand as well, which didn't build any anticipation. However, unlike most of the women, the PC does actually have a motivation for having sex with Melissa by trickery (if you assume he does it because he's angry at Cathy). Melissa's ending was the least interesting for me too.

Purple Dragon: I agree here. This was the hardest scene for me to get into. Much harder than even the pirate scene. I think the main reason is that the pirate scene is so out there that I'm somehow more willing to set my brain aside and enjoy it for what it is. It also helps that, (in my opinion) the scene with Morgan is much better written and more engaging.

In contrast, Melissa is just a normal girl who happens to be too stupid to breathe. I can't help but be reminded of Amy from our Sam Shooter discussion a few months ago. This is a really similar scene in some ways. Both girls are unbelievably stupid. Amy is possibly even a bit more so, since at least Melissa has the excuse of being blindfolded. Yet I enjoyed the scene with Amy, but not this one, and I'm not really sure why that is exactly. Possibly because everything in SS is so out there that you just have to accept those things if you are going to enjoy them at all.

ExLibris: Cathy's scene is the other one that I didn't enjoy. Here it's more a case of too much interaction, as the opening basically makes her the game's antagonist. There's no interaction with her in the middle of the game other than interfering with her attempts to have sex (which makes a mockery of her argument that the PC should go to the reunion to show off his sexy fiancée). By the end of the game I was fairly PO'd with her. That was slightly defused by the sight of her failure to hook up with the drunken footballer, but not enough to make me look forward to the scene. Despite that, I found Cathy's ending to be one of the more plausible ones. It takes some suspension of disbelief to see them living happily ever after, but it is possible. But if the break up with Cathy was more involved (and therefore enjoyable), every other ending would instantly move ahead of it.

Purple Dragon: I kind of enjoyed the bragging bit at the beginning of this scene. If the idea for having sex (or one of them) was to get back at Cathy, then this is a good chance to hear about her couple of little encounters and then rub her nose in the vast amount of sex that you have enjoyed. Of course, if that is the point then she takes some of the wind out of your sails by getting off on every encounter that you relate.

During the actual sex scene she make a few comments about the women you have had encounters with, which is a nice touch. Overall, this could have been a really good scene if the PC had been a more active participant in the whole "final fling" thing. Of course, that would have changed the whole dynamic of the game so that's probably going too far.

ExLibris: The scene with Morgan is completely out of place in this game, but if you can get past that it's quite a fun scene. As I mentioned, it provides a believable reason for the PC to take part in it (Morgan's sword initially, and 'giving her a taste of her own medicine' after that). Sailing off with Morgan to pillage the Spanish Main or whatever was just a step too far for me though.

The scene with the native is probably my favourite of the whole game. It was certainly the one I remembered the best. A lot of the credit for that has to go to the way in which it is set up, which is appropriately cinematic and very easy to visualise the way it is written. The ending is just the icing on the cake. For some reason it reminds me of one of the Leisure Suit Larry games (2 I think, it's been a while since I've played them), especially when you catch the 'natives' after the filming is over. The associated ending is silly but fun, although I'm a little worried that the PC is apparently planning to pursue a career as an unpaid porn star.

Kerrie and Evet are probably second equal for me. Kerrie's scene is undermined somewhat by the fact that the PC effectively picks her at random, but that's cancelled out by how well she's written when the PC is 'interviewing' her. She was definitely one of the more vivid characters in the game for me. Yes, she's not very bright, but not unbelievably so. The strength of her personality carries off the ending as well.

Purple Dragon: I liked Kerrie's scene as well. The conversation you have with her before getting to the sex does a wonderful job of building up the tension in the scene. I also love her reaction when she figures out that you're not gay. Is she pissed to find out that you've been scamming her? Hell no.

"This makes things, like, so much easier!" she says and bounces off the bed to stand before you.

Yeah she's a bit ditsy, but no more so than any girl you're likely to meet who thinks that winning a girls gone wild contest is the height of ecstasy.

ExLibris: Evet is the character I think the PC should end up with. Their reasons for breaking up in high school are pretty contrived though. I also found it a bit odd that she's described as "not the prettiest girl in school" when you look her up in the annual, but when you see her in the flesh she's "stunning" (after ten years and one child no less). Having her burst into tears puts her behind Kerrie in the personality stakes as well, as it makes her more of a damsel in need of rescue. Overall though she's definitely the character that the PC has the strongest reasons for being with, and that carries over into the scene.

Purple Dragon: I think that it is possible to look at a picture of someone and admit that she is not the most beautiful girl you've ever seen. However, if it is someone you were, or are, in love with then it might be harder to believe what you're eyes are telling you. That might be why Evet is described as "stunning" by the PC when others might not see her that way. On the other hand, maybe it's just the romantic in me seeing things that aren't there.

ExLibris: No, I think it's definitely the eyes of love that make her 'stunning' when the PC sees her in the flesh, rather than in a photo. But for some reason I found her slightly less believable as a character because of it. I think it's because she's initially the most realistic of all the female characters in appearance. She's someone you might actually have gone out with during high school. Turning her into 'just another' beautiful girl somehow robs her of that air of reality. Or it could all be in my mind, that's even more likely.

Moriarty: Evet was somewhat grounded in reality in my personal life. I was trying to portray that day to day she is cute and sassy but that in the evening dress and with a couple years she matured into a woman and was stunning. It might have been lost in the writing.

ExLibris: I've left Cynthia until last because I don't really have any strong feelings about her scene or her ending. I'm prejudiced against it because I think that getting a girl drunk is one of the most over-used clichés in AIF. On the other hand 'hot for teacher' is a classic trope, so they kind of balance each other out.

Purple Dragon: First of all, I don't think that the puzzle here was to get her drunk. I think it was a much more typical get object, give to girl, get sex, type puzzle. It just so happened that the object in this case was a drink. I didn't get the impression that she was drunk or that I was trying to get her that way. I will say that I was expecting more from this scene. I'm not really sure what more I was expecting, and the sex itself was great, don't get me wrong, but it somehow didn't seem like enough.

I think some of the reasons for this is that Cynthia is one of the characters that is mentioned right at the beginning of the game, so naturally, you would be looking for her to begin with. Then, when I got to the reunion I think she was the first character I saw. However, you have to jump through quite a few hoops before you get to her scene. Add it together and I guess I was expecting this to be one of the (perhaps 'the') main scene in the game. Still, as Exlibris mentions, just the whole 'hot teacher' thing was enough to do it for me here.

ExLibris: Reading that it almost sounds like we're talking about different scenes. Perhaps we might be as I've never tried giving Cynthia the cocktail without putting the crystals in it first and that might produce a slightly different result. Unfortunately I don't have a convenient save game to test that out. But when you do give her the spiked cocktail it does look like she's under the influence:

"Cynthia accepts your offer graciously. "You've always been such a nice boy," she says with a wink. She takes a tiny sip of your handiwork and her eyes open wide. "Wow, this is sooo yummy!" she says smiling. In one long chug, she sucks down the entire concoction, bits dribbling down her lips. "That was fantastic," she says smiling, her face looking flushed. "I...mm," she says, and her eyes trail over your body from head to to. Cynthia sighs and stretches out her form, placing her hands on her legs. As if driven by a strange force, your drama teacher begins to caresses her inner thighs much to the delight of onlookers. "Look at you, all grown up," she says smiling. Something seems strangely different about her composure. "I just can't believe what a man you've become," Cynthia says eyeing your trousers. Her hands traces over her inner thigh, caressing her legs through the black one piece. That drink really did something odd to her. "Now what did you want to talk about?" she says smiling."

A Bomire: Maybe I'm just interpreting it differently, but I was always under the impression that Cynthia wasn't so much drunk from the cocktail as she was somehow under the influence of the strange crystals which were put into her drink. I thought that they acted as some sort of aphrodisiac, perhaps along with the alcohol in the drink. Of course, the effect is the same: Cynthia is acting at least a little out of character due to the influence of whatever is in the drink (alcohol or drugs, if you want to look at the crystals that way).

Moriarty: Try consulting the guide about crystals.

A. Bomire: Ahh..I never looked there. Yes, they are a powerful aphrodisiac. So it would be their affect on Cynthia and not (wholly) the alcohol.

ExLibris: Sorry, drunk was a poor choice of words on my part since the guide makes it pretty clear that it's the crystals that

actually have the effect and the cocktail is just a vector.

Purple Dragon: Well I'm sorry as well. I completely missed the whole crystals thing. I didn't think to look them up in the guide, and it didn't occur to me that they might have some strange effect. I was looking at them as a simple ice substitute since the hotel evidently doesn't have an ice maker. Yes, Cynthia does seem to quickly get into the scene after drinking the drink, but this is AIF after all. I figured just the fact that I'm me was enough to get her motor running. :) I guess I should pay closer attention from now on.

ExLibris: Overall, I found Reunion to be a fun game, but it feels like a game of parts rather than a whole. Some of those parts actively conflict with each other, while others just don't fit. The opening is a prime offender, but I think that without it the game would have felt a lot more 'generic'. In some ways the opening of Reunion is an inversion of the other two pre-marriage games Last Hurrah and Last Week Before the Wedding (although it came out before either of them), as it makes the PC the normal person and Cathy the typical AIF protagonist (which probably explains why so few AIF protagonists are married)

On the plus side Reunion is one of the best written games I can think of, and that's backed up by how well programmed it is.

A. Bomire: I agree. I'd hate for someone reading this discussion to think that all of the criticism implies that the game isn't any good. It is a good game that I really enjoyed playing, and have played often. The plot has its problems, sure, but otherwise it is a fun game to play.

Purple Dragon: I certainly agree with that. Overall, this is one of my favorite games. So much so that it was on my 'pre-list' when I was doing my top 10 list. It didn't end up making it, but if it had been a top 20 list it would have. The writing is great, and even if the scenes don't mesh together as well as they might, individually, most of them are outstanding. Add in the stories as a little bonus and you have a game that no one should miss.

ExLibris: For me, Reunion's best point is the room descriptions (although the help system comes in pretty handy too). Here's an example:

"You are in your modest living room composed of a tired old green couch, a worn coffee table, and a small alcove with a beat up end table where you do most of your writing. A large book case dominates the room. It's brimming over with the collected works of your lofty classic literature and Cathy's fitness, health, and lifestyle books. Your walls are decorated with photographs of friends and family members lending a more cheerful air than the rest of the worn out room. A tiny hallway leads to the kitchen to the north. To the east is yours and Cathy's bedroom, and to the west is a tiny bathroom. There's also a door leading outside the apartment to the south."

That does pretty much everything a room description should do. For starters it fits into about four lines, so it's a bite-sized, easily digestible piece of text rather than a mini-epic that makes your eyes glaze over. Even so it packs a lot of information into those four lines. At the most basic level it identifies the exits and the major objects in the room (which is pretty much the first thing a player wants to know about a room), but the description itself has character and it incorporates characterisation. If the player didn't know anything about the PC (and at this stage of the game they don't) they would be able to deduce a number of facts from that description: that he's not financially well off, that he's a writer, that he's in a relationship with a woman named Cathy, and that he and Cathy have different tastes (specifically that the PC is a bit of an intellectual while Cathy is more superficial). Room descriptions are a good place to include characterisation since you can guarantee that players will see them, which isn't the case with ask/tell dialogue.

A. Bomire: We've spent a lot of time this month discussing the things that are wrong in "Reunion", or things that Moriarty might have done differently. That could lead readers to think that this game is buggy and disappointing, which is just not the case. The fact that we all spent a lot of time discussing the finer points of the game is because there ARE finer points of the game, which is such a refreshing change from some of the games that come out which are all fluff with no substance. This is a very enjoyable game, with a lot of fun and sexy scenes, interesting characters and situations, and just general overall goodness.

Purple Dragon: I think A. Bomire's last comments say it all. This is a wonderful game with great writing and very hot and engaging sex scenes. If you haven't played this one, then you should do so as soon as possible.

I would again like to thank Moriarty for joining us. He says that he will probably never have the time to write another game, but I'm holding out hope that he will some day. If he ever does, I will be first in line to play it. ♦

Each month we will be bringing you a new top ten list. You should not for a minute believe that the following represents the newsletter's official view on the matter (we don't have one). Rather, this is one person's personal list of favorite games. Speaking from personal experience, it's hard to narrow the list down to ten games, and even harder to rate them in order so you should probably consider any game on any list to be well worth playing. If you don't agree with something, then by all means feel free to write up your own list and send it in. I'll be more than happy to print it.

This month's list is by Knight Errant

Honorable Mention: Normville High by BBBen

Normville High is a short and simple game, but it's one of the first games to have a realistic and well-developed female NPC. Very few games are able to get the player to really feel for his female partner, but *Normville High* did exactly that with Samantha, and in retrospect I think my game *A Lady in Waiting* was an attempt to emulate what BBBen did so well in this game. The only reason it didn't make the top 10 is because it can't really compete with full length games.

10 - Peril in the Skies by Adam Hendine

Although *Peril in the Skies* is an older game, I have a soft spot for it's excellent writing and entertaining world. It feels like something out of an old serial (or *Indiana Jones*, which takes after the old serials). Unlike many AIF games, it feels like something out of a larger world with references to Jack Darcy's past adventures, and with well developed characters. It's truly a shame there aren't more games in it's vein. Despite it's age, the writing is more than enough to make up for it.

9 - Fever Cabin by GoddoG

Some AIF games can feel a bit disjointed between scenes. In *Fever Cabin*, this is by design. This is one of the most original AIF concepts I've played, and despite the relative lack of sex during the main thrust of the game (pun intended), the intriguing world that GoddoG built and the excellent scene at the end is more than enough to make the game worth playing. If you've played *Fever Cabin*, you know exactly what I'm talking about. If you haven't played it, then I don't want to spoil it for you as the discovery is much of the fun of the game.

8 - Reunion by Moriarty

Since *Reunion* is the subject of this month's discussion, you've already read everything I have to say about the game. It's well written and well coded, and only some relatively minor plot inconsistencies keep it from being higher on my list.

7 - Crossworlds 2 by BBBen

I'm a geek, and I love fantasy games ... swords and sorcery fantasy, I mean. One of the really fun aspects of BBBen's *Crossworlds* series is to see the characters we know in a variety of different situations, real-ish life, sci-fi, fantasy, and horror. In my opinion, *Crossworlds 2* is great because it can skip all the character building that already occurred in CW1, but the characters are still somewhat new and there's more to explore about them ... they're not yet the old familiar friends that they will be in CW4.

6 - Crossworlds 4: Scream For Me by BBBen

Much of the fun of *Crossworlds 4* is in how familiar the characters have become by this point. This game is full of references to the rest of the series, but at the same time the horror setting keeps things fresh and interesting. BBBen also does some very innovative things in this game, such as the scene with Lisa and the final scene (again, if you've played the game you know what I'm referring to ... if not, stop reading and play!) *CW4* was an excellent way for BBBen to wrap up the CW series and lead his characters to a very happy and sweet ending.



5 - Moist by Scarlet Herring

Moist is another older game, but it still manages to hold it's own due to the excellent writing and the broad range of options available to the player. Only *One Girl* manages to exceed *Moist* in terms of the range of sex available to you. B&D, light S&M and double-penetration are all aspects that are overlooked in other games, and each character has a different tolerance level for it. All four of the women have very different personalities and preferences. The only negative aspect in my opinion is Morgase. After the other characters, Morgase just felt too much like a puzzle in the shape of a sex scene and not enough like a woman to pleasure. Luckily for us, all the positive aspects of *Moist* were accentuated and all the negative aspects improved in

4 - Malaise by A. Ninny

Although the beginning of *Malaise* is rather un-sexy, I love seeing how the player's actions improve life for the women in the castle. A. Ninny took all the characters from *Moist* and further developed their personalities in *Malaise*. Most notable are the improvements to Morgase. A. Ninny took the world of *Moist* and developed answers to many questions like "what happened after the earthquake?", "where did the diamond come from?", "where do all those bottles of milk come from?", and "where did they get their money?". The sex is also very hot and well written, even if it's more limited than in *Moist*.

3 - Dexter Dixon by A. Bomire

I've sometimes considered writing a hardboiled detective game myself, the concept really lends itself well to AIF. However, no matter what plot idea I come up with, I always compare it to *Dexter Dixon* and my game always loses horribly. A. Bomire's story and writing are excellent in this game, he does an excellent job with the classic detective story. The Fairy's first role is an excellent easter egg for the player to find. There's plenty of sex through the game, but the final scene with Claudia is very detailed and extensive ... and the Prussian Pussy's secret is lots of fun.

2 - Key to Eternity by GoblinBoy

Everyone probably remembers all the uproar that *K2E* made when it was released. This is the biggest, most ambitious AIF game ever made. Two PCs, tons of sex, lots of positions, tons of pictures, interesting plot, and a gameplay length that resembles the games in the heyday of IF. There's a reason it swept the Erins when it came out. However, it's actually a bit too long for my preference. I rarely have the time or energy for the maraton run of AIF.

1 - Tomorrow Never Comes by A. Bomire

James Bond has got to be the perfect character for AIF. Trickery, intrigue, hot women and casual sex, the franchise seems made for AIF. Of course, that would just be too easy. Instead, A. Bomire places you in the shoes of a minor technician with dreams of glory who is way over his head. It also has excellent use of multimedia for atmosphere even if there aren't any pictures of the women. It's also unique for having a car chase and a falling-from-an-airplane chase. Despite the James Bond stereotype, Janet is initially rather annoyed at the PC, and he has to work quite a bit to win her over. My only nitpick is how the Baccarat game at the beginning plays. There's no trick or strategy to it, it's just rigged in your favor. X-ray glasses would have been fitting for Bond, even though it had already been done in *Moist*.

Aquila Station

Review by Exlibris

Game Info:	Aquila Station
Author:	Portmanteau
Release Date:	January 19, 2010
Platform:	TADS3
Size:	714k
Content:	mf
Type:	Science-fiction puzzlefest
Length:	Short
Reviewed:	February 2010



Story

Despite being a piece of science fiction, in terms of its tone Aquila Station is probably the most realistic piece of AIF to appear for quite some time. For a full-length game it's at the shorter end of the spectrum, with only three NPCs and two encounters. But the author makes effective use of the smaller canvas, telling a complete self-contained story (the ending leaves the possibility of a sequel open, but I don't think the story necessarily requires one).

The story is split cleanly into two halves by an event that also halves the number of living characters. In the first half the PC takes the role of a lowly technician aboard a space station (shades of Roger Wilco), whose immediate goals include retrieving objects lost down toilets and trying to make the acquaintance of the female characters. That's not an atypical setup for AIF, but the writing and the portrayal of the characters keeps the game more anchored in reality than is usual. In the second half of the game, the PC gets to play the hero, rescuing the damsel in distress.

It's a strong story, and one that's refreshingly different from the flights of fantasy that are more common to AIF. The one point that I think could have been improved on is the number of people killed by the attack. The station is described as understaffed, but it's implied that there are more crew members than are seen onstage. Having a few more dead bodies turn up would have given the attack a greater impact and emphasised how alone the surviving two characters now are (or perhaps I'm just bloodthirsty).

Characters

I think Aquila Station shows both the strengths and the weaknesses of using a 'talk to' system for conversing with NPCs. Natural conversation is stronger for characterisation, but there's a limit to how much general dialogue an author can fit into a game without it seeming forced, which in turn limits the amount of characterisation possible. Ask/tell is obviously less naturalistic than conversation, but it has the advantage of being focused on particular topics and therefore easier to write more of. It's also more interactive for the player than simply typing 'talk to x' over and over.

Lisa gets the most 'talks', with the result that she is the best drawn of the three characters. Her personality comes across well in her dialogue, which made her seem 'alive' to me (and consequently sad when she died). The Commander gets only a couple of talks, but he's more of a 'type' than a character and his dialogue just reinforces that basic personality. Last is Alyse, who I think is the weakest of the three characters. She gets a handful of conversations, but the majority of them are plot oriented (e.g. I've lost my necklace, thank you for finding my necklace). With that limited dialogue and the lack of any ask/tell options to provide some rounding for her character, she remains something of a cipher throughout the game. That impression is reinforced by her necklace, which is described as common to a certain 'type' of person rather than being individual.

Technical

Aquila Station runs very smoothly, which reflects well on the author and his testers. The closest thing to a bug that I could find was the fact that it's possible for the PC to perform tender acts of love while wearing a space suit with a drill attachment on the arm. There aren't any examples of impressive or complex technical implementation, but the game gets along perfectly fine without them.

For the most part the puzzles are quite straightforward. There's seldom any question of what the PC should do, but there's sometimes some uncertainty about how it should be done. Disabling the security system at the end of the game is probably the best example. It was fairly obvious that the Commander's palmscan would be required, but I didn't find the verb needed or the location of the scanner to be sufficiently well clued.

Sex

Aquila Station includes two sex scenes. The scenes themselves are well written, but overall lack the 'X' factor that would have made them truly memorable.

I also felt that the scenes could have been set up better. In Lisa's scene all the PC has to do is talk to her a couple of times and she's ready. I find that I enjoy sex scenes in AIF more when I've done something to 'earn' them, so the lack of build-up hurt the scene for me. There is also the fact that the scene takes place in what is effectively a public area, and given the brevity of their courtship it seemed a little unbelievable that Lisa would take a 'right here, right now' attitude to sex.

The problems I had with Alyse's scene stemmed more from the characterisation she was given. The PC doesn't really have any

meaningful interactions with her during the first half of the game, and during the second half she's in shock. That doesn't make her an object of desire in the same way that the more vivacious Lisa was. The setup for the actual scene (i.e. the PC rescuing her and taking them both to safety) isn't too bad, but it's undercut by Alyse's extreme passivity. That, added to the fact that it's explicitly noted that she looks unusually young, makes her seem like a helpless child. Even though she makes the first move once the shuttle is in flight, I still felt like the PC was taking advantage of her.

Writing

The writing of Aquila Station is definitely above average, though it occasionally stumbles or tries too hard. The room descriptions are detailed enough to give the locations a sense of uniqueness and believability without becoming mini-epics. This is carried through to the descriptions of any items in the rooms, whether they are relevant to the story or not.

Unlike many games, Aquila Station presents a close relationship between narrator and protagonist. There are a number of asides which seem to come direct from the protagonist and go a long way to fleshing out his character, as well as providing some humour in what is otherwise a realistic and ultimately downbeat game.

Conclusion

Aquila Station is without doubt a strong first game, hovering somewhere between a B and a B+. It's well-written, with a plot that's original and manages to rise above some of the clichés of AIF. Killing off Lisa midway through the game was certainly a gutsy move. It also means that her sex scene serves a purpose in dramatic terms, heightening the player's attachment to her in order to increase the reaction when she's snatched away. I actually felt a moment of sadness when I came across her dead body, which isn't something that most AIF manages, and that pushes my final grade over the top to a B+.

Rating: B+

Memories Are Made of These

Review by Purple Dragon

Game Info:	Memories Are Made Of These ver 2.0
Author:	Optimus
Release Date:	August 2002
Platform:	TADS 2
Size:	213 kb
Content:	mf, ff (voyeur)
Type:	???
Length:	Short
Reviewed:	February 2010
Extras:	Multiple endings

Basic Story

You awake quite pleasantly in your girlfriend's bed with her – er – taking care of you. Life is good, except for the fact that at first, you can't quite remember the lovely girl's name. In fact, all your memories seem to be pretty fuzzy.

Overall Thoughts

You might have noticed that I copped out and didn't list a game type above. That is because this game kind of defies classification into one of the categories that we usually use. It is not T&AIF, because although it does have sex in it, that does not really seem to be the main thrust of the game. On the other hand, it is not a puzzle fest either. It does have a couple of puzzles, but they are not hard, and do not really run the game. So what the hell is it?

In my opinion this game is all about the story. The PC starts out knowing next to nothing about himself or the other characters. This knowledge is drip fed to you throughout the game through exploration of the environment, and dreams. It is a very effective method of telling a story as you try to figure out what is going on along with the PC. The atmosphere and pacing of the game is wonderful as well.

Puzzles/Game Play

As I mentioned above, there are a few puzzles, but I doubt they will give anyone any problems. If you do get to a point where you don't know what to do next then paying attention to background messages about what the other characters are doing should be enough to point you in the right direction. In addition to providing hints, the background messages add to the atmosphere of the game by making it appear that the other characters have lives of their own.

Sex

The sex in the game is a bit different from a lot of other games. Not in the sense of the scenes themselves, but rather what you have to do to get to them, which is pretty much nothing at all. I say 'them', but there is really only one interactive scene in the game. I've heard rumors that earlier versions of the game allowed another, but I never played an earlier version so I can't say. There are a couple other little snippets to keep your motor running, but sex really isn't the focus here. However, that is not to say that what is here is not well written and titillating.

Technical

I think that it is probably clear by now that I like this game. There are a lot of good things going on, and the overall sweep of the game is impressive. However, all that is not to say that it doesn't have its share of problems. First and foremost, it is a very short game. I really wish that the author had taken the time to develop the game even more. The mystery of who the PC is, and what is going on in the house eventually unfolds no matter what you do. It would have been nice if the player were forced to take a more active part in uncovering the mystery.

There are also a lot of areas where the environment was not developed enough. The room descriptions are good, well above average in my opinion, and you can pretty much at least refer to everything mentioned in them, which is a step in the right direction. However, the responses to a lot of things are too curt, giving the feeling that the author just didn't want to deal with it. This normally wouldn't be all that bad, but because this game is so short, the environment so small, and mostly because of the nature of the game itself, I wanted to do more exploring and poking around than the game would allow.

Final Thoughts

I don't know if everyone will like this game. If all you play these for is the sex then you might be a bit disappointed. Even though I really enjoy the occasional sex-for-sex-sake type game, I also like games that try to be more than that sometimes. This game is about the story and atmosphere. The sex fits in well when it appears, but does not even pretend to be the main thrust of the game. Better implementation and a lengthier story would have made it even better, but as is, it is well worth a play.

Rating: B-

If you can write game reviews, articles, opinion pieces, humorous essays, or endless blather, we want you. Contact the Editor for suggested content or just write what you want and send it to us.

Submitting your work to Inside Erin:

Please direct all comments, articles, reviews, discussion and art to the Editor at aifsubmissions@gmail.com.



Editor:

Purple Dragon has written several AIF games including *Archie's Birthday - Chapter 1: Reggie's Gift*, *A Dream Come True*, and *Time in the Dark*. He has received one Erin award and been nominated for several others.

Staff:

A Bomire is the author of several TADS AIF games, including *Dexter Dixon: In Search of the Prussian Pussy*, *Tomorrow Never Comes* and *The Backlot*. His games have won numerous awards and Erin nominations. He was the co-recipient of the Badman Memorial Lifetime Achievement Award in 2006.

A Ninny is an AIF player, author of four AIF games and frequent beta-tester. His *Parlour* received an Erin for Best "One Night Stand" game in 2004 and his most recent game, *HORSE* walked away with three Erins at the 2007 awards show.

BBBen is an author of a number of Adrift AIF games. His games have received numerous Erin awards and nominations and first place in A. Bomire's 2004 mini-comp. He was also the recipient of the 2007 Badman Memorial Lifetime Achievement Award.

Bitterfrost is a longtime IF/AIF player working on his first (and last) game, *How I Got Syphilix*.

Dudeman has released one game and is working on a second. He has also released an impressive Inform 7 sex extension to help make it easier for others to write games of their own.

Knight Errant is an AIF player who has released two games and is currently working on a couple of others.

'trix has released one game, *Casting*, which was written in Inform 6, and is sporadically working on another in TADS 3.

